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INTRODUCTION

Alright soldier, you've read through the Rebel Diet Guide, you've cleared all the junk food out of your house, and you're ready to start eating better!

The only problem is, you walk into a grocery store, and you still have no freaking clue on what to buy! Ruh roh, Shaggy. After all, if you can't buy frozen pizzas anymore, and fast food from the drive-through window isn't going to cut it, then what ARE you supposed to eat?

Fortunately, us rebels stick together, and I'm here to help you put together a battle plan that will have you in and out of that supermarket in record time with healthy foods that help take you closer to your goal of being more awesome.

By the end of this guide you'll learn how to properly read a nutrition label, devise a solid battle plan for every time you go shopping, build a kitchen cooking starter kit, and create a few decent meals that don't require much effort.

I have always been an awfully picky eater. Growing up, I only ate cereal for breakfast, peanut butter sandwiches for lunch, and macaroni and cheese and chicken fingers for dinner. Ultimately, it came down to the fact that I was simply scared of trying new things, and didn't want to put forth any effort to change.

I didn't get better when I got older either.

I didn't buy my first vegetable on my own from a supermarket until I was 22! Fortunately, I've changed, and I now have a freezer stocked full of frozen fruits and vegetables and a pantry stocked with only healthy foods that I can actually turn into a decent meal!

If a reformed vegetable-hater like me can learn to love greens, so can you. It's time to start kicking ass in the eating-right department. You know how I always talking about challenging yourself with exercise every time you work out? Well, it's time to start challenging yourself every time you step foot in a grocery store.

Strap on your helmet, it's basic training time.

CHANGING YOUR MENTALITY

Good food does not come out of a drive-through window, from under the flap of a vending machine, or out of the frozen tv-dinner section of your neighborhood grocery store.

Good food comes from sources that are as close to natural as possible. The fewer steps between the product being grown and then eaten, the healthier it most likely is for you. Let me explain further: Veggies grow, they're picked, and then you eat them. Fruit grows, it's picked, and then you eat it. Healthy!

On the other hand, grains have to be processed in some way into a more edible form, and then they can be eaten. Less healthy for you. Makes sense, right? Things like candy, soda, cookies, etc. are created in many steps with many chemicals and funky ingredients. Not surprisingly, they're terrible for you. Obviously, there are exceptions to this rule on both sides, but it's a pretty good place to start.

It's time to start thinking healthy when you go shopping. It might be a little boring, it might not taste as good as the crap you've been eating lately (which will change once you start to get better at cooking), but there's a phrase coined by Tony Robbins (yeah, the huge self-help dude with big hands) that was passed along to me from my friend Baker over at **ManVsDebt.com**:

"Nothing tastes as good as looking good feels."

Deep down inside, we all want to look good naked and live long healthy lives, don't we? I know I do. I'm guessing you do too. So, let's start turning things around and make decisions based on how much better off our lives will be, instead of chasing instant (and short lived) gratification.

It's kind of like investing in a 401k. Yeah, it might be more fun to blow all of your money now on irresponsible things, but years down the road when you're looking to retire and haven't saved a dime, you're kind of sh** outta luck. Your health is no different: start making healthy choices now and they will pay dividends for years and years down the road.

Still with me? Good. Let's get started.

HOW TO READ A NUTRITION LABEL

When you pick up food to buy it, how often do you look at the label? I never used to, but I now take a quick glance at everything I buy just to make sure it lines up with my plans for leading the eventual worldwide Nerd Fitness Rebellion (which is coming sooner than you think!)

Not everything will have a label – fresh fruits and veggies don't have labels – but for the most part everything that's canned, bagged, bottled, or boxed will have a nutrition label. This makes our job of picking out healthy food so much easier, as it's pretty damn tough to lie on a nutrition label (though not impossible, as you'll see).

There are some important things to quickly note when looking at a nutrition label. Once you're trained eye gets used to quickly scanning for these few important things, you'll be a healthy food sniper:

Serving size, calories per serving, macro & micro nutrients, and ingredients.

SERVING SIZE

Every food label is required to tell you what its manufacturer considers a "serving size." This is the amount of food that every other number on the label is based around, and the number you need to keep an eye on.

I'm sure this will come as a shock to you, but a lot of times a serving size is tiny, so the product's unhealthy qualities don't seem so bad.

For example, did you realize that there were 2.5 servings in that 20 oz. sports drink? That means for every calorie and gram of sugar listed on the label, you need to multiple by 2.5 if you drink it all.

- **If you're eating a sandwich,** check to see if the serving size is per slice of bread or for two slices.
- **If it's a snack**, see how many pieces are considered a serving before eating the whole famil- sized bag.
- **If it's pasta,** I can almost guarantee you're used to eating way more than one serving. A serving is a small amount, not a plateful (I don't recommend eating a lot of pasta anyway).
- **Use a measuring cup for rice, oats, milk, veggies, and other foods** that aren't easy to count out individually.

Once you start to note how big a serving size is for your favorite meals, you'll learn to estimate how much you can eat while still running a calorie deficit and losing weight. Adjusting your mental image of how big a serving size starts TODAY.

Think of your stomach as a muscle that needs to be trained. You don't REALLY need all of that food that you usually eat, but your stomach is accustomed to that amount so anything less will make you feel hungry. Slowly lower your calorie count, increase the vegetable count, and eventually your stomach will learn to deal with the smaller portions too.

CALORIES PER SERVING

Generally, you need to eat less calories than you burn on a daily basis if you're going to lose weight. As I've said before, not all calories are created equal, but it's a start.

Now that you know how many calories you should eat each day to lose weight (explained in the Rebel Diet Guide), look at the foods you're buying, check the serving size, the number of calories per serving, and figure out how much to eat. No rocket science degree required.

If you want to eat the whole bag/box/container, multiply the number of calories by the number of total servings. Whatever it is though, I'm going to recommend you DON'T eat the whole thing.

Counting calories works. Tyler over at **344pounds.com** lost over 130 pounds in a year by counting calories and making sure he ran a daily calorie deficit (along with daily exercise, of course). Personally, I don't enjoy counting calories, but I know you will be successful if you keep track of EVERY CALORIE you eat and stay on target.

MACRONUTRIENTS

There are a few things that I look at right away when reading the back of a label. Let's break down what's what:

Fat – If I'm going to eat something with fat in it, I want it to be good fat. No to trans fat. Yes to polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat. Moderate amounts of Saturated fats.

The FDA promotes a low-fat, high carb diet which has helped the people in our country get fatter and fatter over the past 30 years. Mark of **Marks Daily Apple** eats a diet that's around 60% fat, 30% protein, and 10% carbohydrates, and he has a body fat percentage down in the single digits. It works. Almonds, walnuts, most nuts, avocados, olive oil, and flaxseed oil are all good sources of healthy fats that will help your body function.

Cholesterol – Recent high-profile studies (just Google "Framingham Heart Study") have shown that there to be no correlation between dietary cholesterol intake and blood cholesterol levels.

Although it's been vilified for decades, cholesterol is actually an important building block in cell membranes. We get some from food, and some is made in our liver.

I like things in moderation, so simply keep an eye on your cholesterol but don't overanalyze your intake. If you're eating lots of fruits, veggies, lean meats, nuts, and so on, you don't have to worry as much about your food cholesterol intake.

Sodium – Sodium is a nutrient that's important in small doses, but can cause a bunch of problems if it's consumed in too high a quantity. Pre-packaged and canned foods, along with almost all Chinese foods, are often loaded up with high amounts of sodium, which can lead to bloating and high blood pressure.

Keep this number in check. The amount for each person will differ depending on how active you are (runners and athletes should consume more sodium, for example), so do some research and check with your doctor if sodium intake is an issue for you.

Potassium = Good. A potassium-rich diet blunts the effects of salt on blood pressure, may reduce the risk of developing kidney stones, and possibly decrease bone loss with age. WIN!

Healthy sources of potassium include potatoes, bananas, dried fruits, most meats, strawberries, kiwi, and dairy products.

Carbohydrates – If you're going to eat carbs, make sure they're from a source that's processed as little as possible, like vegetables and fruits. If you're going to eat grains, go for brown rice instead of white rice, wheat bread instead of white bread, and plain oatmeal instead of carb-loaded donuts or bagels.

Now, the worst kind of carbohydrate is…

Sugar – Too much sugar makes you fat - plain and simple. If you are interested in losing weight, you should do everything you can to keep your sugar content as low as possible.

If you're addicted to sugar, track your sugar intake for a few days, and then challenge yourself to lower your sugar intake by 10 grams each week until it's down to a manageable number.

A single soda can have 48 grams of sugar, a glass of orange juice has 22 grams of sugar, and certain vitamin enhanced waters can have 20+ grams of sugar in one bottle - the amount of sugar you consume unsuspectingly can creep up quickly.

When you need a candy fix, go with dark chocolate over milk chocolate - it actually has some health benefits! If you're addicted to soda and drink a twelve-pack a day, it's time to start weaning yourself off it. Chug water all day, slowly decrease your sugar intake over the next few weeks/ months, and you'll start to see some changes.

Yes, it's true that fruit does contain sugar. However, when you're consuming the actual fruit (not fruit juice), you're getting a natural source of sugar along with a list of other nutritious benefits (including fiber). Don't beat yourself up over eating too much natural fruit – it's good for you. Speaking of fruit…

Fiber – Fiber will help fill you up and keep things moving inside your body. If you're eating enough fruit and vegetables, you'll have enough fiber in your system. No need to overdo it. Make sure you're drinking enough water for the fiber in your system to do its job. Whole grains have a bunch of fiber too, but I still recommend minimizing grains when possible and instead getting your fiber from fruits and veggies.

Protein – my favorite macronutrient! Protein will fill you up, repair your muscles, and is incredibly difficult to turn into fat in your system (unlike carbohydrates). Any sort of animal meat will generally have a ton of protein, as will things like nuts, beans, and most dairy products. Protein, protein, protein!

Now, If you're a really big guy or girl, I wouldn't recommend eating more than 200 grams of protein per day, as your liver can have issues with TOO much of a good thing. Keep it under 200g per day until you get down to a more manageable weight.

If you're a meat guy/girl and wondering what kind of protein to buy:

If you're buying lean ground beef, I try to aim for the 85% lean / 15% fat or 90% lean / 10% fat. Some burger meat is super fatty and lower in protein – try to go for quality if you can.

If you're buying chicken, aim for skinless chicken breasts over legs and thighs. If you're lazy, simply buy a bag of frozen boneless chicken breast tenderloins from **Tyson** – a bag of 10 servings can be bought at Target for around 6 bucks. I'll explain how to cook them later.

The easiest way to explain good sources of protein - If it flew threw the air, swam in the ocean, or grazed on a plain, it's probably loaded with protein.

Other sources of protein include: eggs, dairy, almonds and most nuts, shellfish, legumes (beans), quinoa.

MICRONUTRIENTS

I won't go over all of these, but I will touch on some of the key players. If you don't see a micronutrient listed on the label, it's because there aren't any in it. Look at your favorite candy or soda. See any micronutrients? Nope. That's why they're called empty calories. Heyooo!

Calcium: Needed to keep your bones strong. This is especially important for women, because bone mass decreases after menopause, so build your bones strong while you are young! Being smart now pays dividends later. Dairy products are usually high in calcium, but if you're minimizing dairy you can get your calcium from almonds, avocados, broccoli, asparagus, cabbage, kale, seafood, and whey products.

Vitamin D: Needed to aid absorption of calcium. Some of this comes from food (like milk and other dairy), but most is made by your body when you are exposed to direct sunlight. I try to get at least twenty minutes of sun a day, which is quite tough in the winter. Many would recommend taking a vitamin D supplement depending on where you live and what time of year it is.

Most dairy products these days are fortified with vitamin D, but you can also get it through fatty fish (salmon, catfish, tuna), mushrooms, and cod liver oil… though I've never had cod liver oil.

If you're going to drink milk, I'd probably lean towards skim milk. Skim milk doesn't have any fat, but it still has 10+ grams of sugar (no different than whole milk). Skim milk DOES have less calories though, so I'd probably go with it if you're losing weight. Remember though, dairy in moderation.

Iron: Needed to make hemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying substance in blood cells. Women are more at-risk for being iron deficient, while men are more at-risk for being iron overloaded. Good sources of iron are lean beef, turkey, oatmeal, most kinds of beans, spinach, and oysters.

Putting it all together: If you eat a really bland and unhealthy diet, you'll probably be deficient in some of these minerals. However, by eating a diet that's full of lean meats, nuts, fruits, and a variety of vegetables, you won't have to pay too much attention to calculating your micronutrients.

INGREDIENTS

Last but certainly not least, it's time to look at the ingredients. Ingredients are always listed in the order of prevalence in the product. So, the ingredient listed first represents the highest percentage ingredient in there, and the ingredient at the end represents the lowest percentage.

When shopping, the more natural your food is, generally the smaller the ingredient list will be, the less processed it will be, and the healthier it will be. If it's unhealthy and processed, it probably has a disgustingly long ingredient list of mostly unpronounceable things.

Think of the some healthy foods - Lettuce (ingredients: lettuce), grilled chicken (ingredients: chicken), almonds (ingredients: almonds), natural peanut butter (ingredients: peanuts), old-fashioned oatmeal (ingredients: oats).

Now think of some unhealthy foods - Here are the ingredients listed on a simple "healthy" microwave dinner for one:

Beef Tips In Mushroom Gravy (Seasoned Cooked Beef Strips and Binder Product - Caramel Colored [Beef, Water, Contains 2% or less of: Caramel Color, Dextrose, Flavor (Natural Flavor, Salt, Maltodextrin, Dried Whey, Dried Cauliflower, Sesame Oil), Modified Cornstarch, Potassium Phosphate, Salt, Sodium Phosphates, Spice Extractives], Water, Portobello Mushrooms, Contains less than 2% of: Onion, Cabernet Sauvignon Wine, Modified Food Starch, Beef Extract, Roasted Garlic Puree [Garlic, High Maltose Corn Syrup Solids], Salt, Brown Sugar, Flavorings, Wheat Flour, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Potassium Chloride, Caramel Color, Locust Bean Gum, Spice, Carrot Extract, Maltodextrin, Soybean Oil, Autolyzed Yeast, Lactic Acid, Citric Acid). Mashed Potatoes (Rehydrated Potato Flakes and Granules [Water, Potatoes, Mono- and Diglycerides, Sodium Acid Pyrophosphate, Disodium Dihydrogen Pyrophosphate, Citric Acid, Sodium Bisulfite Cultures Enzymes), Salt, Bht], and Flavorings [Contains Maltodextrin As A Processing Aid], Sugar, Methylcellulose Gum, Butter Flavor (Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil, Natural Flavors (Butter Oil, Enzyme Modified Butter Fat, Sweet Whey Powder, Nonfat Dry Milk Powder), and Soy Lecithin (An Emulsifier)], Pepper), Apples and Broccoli, Water, Carrots, Brown Sugar, Oatmeal Topping: Rolled Oats, Sugar, High Fructose Corn Syrup Sugar, Soybean Oil, Honey, Brown Sugar, Molasses, Modified Cornstarch, Nonfat Dry Milk (Nonfat Dry Milk, Vitamin A Palmitate and Vitamin D3), Wheat Flour, Sweet Dairy Whey, Sweet Cream Powder (Cream, Nonfat Milk Solids, Sodium Caseinate, Sodium Aluminosilicate), Caramelized Sugar (Maltodextrin, Natural Flavoring, Modified Cornstarch, Caramel Color, [Contains Eggs]), Vanilla Flavor (Water, Ethyl Alcohol, Corn Syrup, Polysorbate 80 and Caramel Color), Artificial Butter Caramel Flavor (Propylene Glycol, Natura Flavors, Artificial Flavors), Caramel Color, Salt.

That's for ONE MEAL. For a meal containing like three things, is four million ingredients really necessary? Keep things natural, keep things simple, keep the ingredient list short, and learn how to start making your own meals (which I'll get to next).

ABOVE ALL ELSE, start reading every label, and watch out for sugar and its cousins (high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, glucose, organic cane syrup, dextrose, and pretty much anything else ending in 'ose'). Manufacturers will get tricky and list ten different kinds of sugars instead of listing it once, so they will all appear much lower down on the list of ingredients than if their totals were combined into one ingredient.

That's cheating.

Take a look at that loaf of "whole grain wheat bread" you just picked up – it probably has high fructose corn syrup listed as one of the top five ingredients. Shame on those manufacturers!

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Watch your calories and serving size – serving sizes are usually smaller than you think!
- Keep carbs and sugar low – aim for less than 50 grams of sugar a day as a goal, and less than 150 grams of carbs per day.
- Eat lots of protein – lean meats and good protein should be part of every meal.
- Eat all the vegetables you want – they're low in calories, high in fiber and nutrients, and are very good for you.
- Read the ingredient list – no high fructose corn syrup, mostly healthy things you recognize, keep the list short.

If you're looking to bulk up - you're going to want to load up on quantities of things like oats, brown rice, quinoa, almond butter sandwiches on flaxseed bread, yams, sweet potatoes, and so on. Your carb count can be much higher than somebody who is losing weight, but make sure it's all healthy food. I go through tubs of oats and boxes of brown rice every week when I'm building muscle – it's a cheap way to get quality calories. Eat more, but make sure you're eating more healthy things. Let me know if you have questions on this.

HOW TO SUCCEED

Now that we have the basics down, it's time to start formulating a good strategy for buying ingredients and preparing your meals. This is how you are going to succeed:

Learn portion sizes. For at least a week, keep track of your calories and meals, and take note of how big your meals are supposed to be. Once your eyes get readjusted to how big a serving size is, your stomach will start to adjust as well. Here's some advice for setting up your plate:

> **Craig Ballantyne of Turbulence Training** - recommends dividing your plate into quarters. Two quarters should be filled up with different vegetables and/or fruits, one quarter should be your lean meat/ protein source, and one quarter can be your carb (brown rice, baked potato). If you're sticking to the primal diet, it'd be more like 2/3rds of the plate will be veggies and fruit, 1/3rd will be your protein source.

Bill Phillips of Body for Life recommends counting portions instead of calories. This is good advice for those of us that find numbers too daunting and we don't want to count them. A portion is generally the size of your clenched fist. A chicken breast is that size, a baked potato is that size, a serving of rice is that size, a decent quantity of veggies is that size, and so on.

Buy in bulk, buy frozen when necessary. I buy bags and bags of frozen chicken breasts, and I have bags and bags of frozen green beans, broccoli, and "vegetable medleys" in my freezer – healthy, easy to prepare, and incredibly cheap. Fresh vegetables certainly taste better, but if you get busy and miss a few nights of cooking they will tend to go bad before you get to use them all. Frozen veggies stay good for a looooong time.

Get good at making a few key meals, and then expand from there. I cover all of this later, but here's a quick summary: I'm still quite lost in a kitchen, but I can whip up a mean batch of chicken, brown rice, and asparagus. When I run out of asparagus, I cook broccoli or green beans (or both). Sometimes I add in a simple salad if I'm up for it.

I eat this meal like five times a week. Sure, it might get a little boring sometimes, but I know I'm eating healthy and I use different spices to mix stuff up. I eat healthy with these meals during the week so I can eat pizza or hot wings and drink a few beers on the weekend guilt-free.

Prepare in bulk, eat throughout the week. The biggest excuse I hear every day is that "I don't have time to cook my own meals." You're lying. Sunday night, while you're watching True Blood and Entourage, coat eight chicken breasts with olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic powder, then bake them in your oven.

Eat one and save the other seven for your lunch/dinner for your next meals by putting them in Tupperware or bags and sticking them in the fridge. Two minutes in the microwave on 50% power at your office along with a salad/ bunch of veggies and you have a lunch that cost you a few dollars, fills you up, and gets you one step closer to your goals.

Make small changes. If you try to change everything at once, you will likely get overwhelmed and give up. Each week, work on changing just one thing. This is how I made the gradual transition from Skippy peanut butter sandwiches on white bread (my favorite thing ever) to almond butter sandwiches on flaxseed bread. Throw those two new ingredients at the old Steve, and I probably wouldn't even have touched it. Instead, I eased my way into it:

- **Week one** – switch from white bread to whole wheat bread
- **Week two** – switch from Skippy Peanut butter to natural Skippy peanut butter
- **Week three** – switch from whole wheat bread to healthier flaxseed bread.
- **Week four** – switch from natural Skippy Peanut butter to actual natural peanut butter (where the only ingredient is peanuts)
- **Week five** – hesitantly try out almond butter and fall in love with it.

Yup, it took me five weeks to make a simple change on a simple peanut butter sandwich. But I stuck with it, I stepped a little further outside of my taste bud comfort zone each week, and I'm eating much healthier sandwiches because of my slow change.

Beware the camouflaged enemy – There are so many unhealthy foods out there that have been disguised as healthy to make you feel good about your purchase and keep you fat. Not cool. Don't fall victim to these traps:

Orange juice, apple juice, etc. – fruit juices have to be healthy, they're made from fruit… right? WRONG. It's all of the bad parts of the fruit without the good parts. It's glorified sugar water, which is why a serving can have more than 20 grams of sugar. Either squeeze your own (and even then, only drink it occasionally) or just stick with water. Green tea is a GREAT healthy beverage too.

Granola – it looks healthy, and hippies eat it… it has to be healthy, right? WRONG. Most granolas are pretty much a bunch of carbs held together by a bunch of sugar. Lara bars and Luna bars are pretty healthy as far as bars go – just get in the habit of always reading your ingredients before making an informed decision.

Organic snack foods – but it's made with pure sugar cane instead of high fructose corn syrup, so it's better, right? SLIGHTLY. It's still loaded with sugar and empty calories with zero nutritional value. Organic doesn't always mean healthy! Instead, eat snacks like natural beef jerky, homemade trail mix (almonds, raisins, walnuts, pecans, and other dried fruits), cottage cheese, an apple and walnuts, or an almond butter sandwich on flaxseed bread (so damn good).

Vitaminwater – Coca-Cola is currently being sued for false advertising for Vitaminwater. Their defense? "No consumer could reasonably be misled into thinking Vitaminwater was a healthy beverage." FAIL. Loaded with empty calories, sugar, and very little healthy ingredients, it's not good for you, despite what they've been saying in EVERY AD since creating the product. Same with other sports drinks like Gatorade too unfortunately. Their zero-calorie options are certainly better for you, but just plain water is going to be your best bet.

Smoothies from smoothie shops – It's a fruit smoothie, which is good, right? WRONG. They're always loaded with tons of sugar and calories, often negating the positive effects from the fruit. Unless you made the smoothie yourself, I wouldn't trust it. Some smoothies from Smoothie King or Planet Smoothie can have up to 80 grams of sugar in them. Holy crap Batman! Make your own smoothies so you know what's in them. Don't worry, I'll show you how to get started in the recipe section.

Protein bars – You need protein, it's called a protein bar, what's the problem? Most of the time, these protein bars are garbage, loaded with sugar and calories and its protein is the only redeeming quality. Get your protein from almonds and other snacks separately. Only eat the protein bar if you have no other option and you need to get some muscle-building calories into your system.

Moral of the story: Don't listen to what the marketers tell you, don't listen to what the front of the label tells you. The nutrition label reveals all! You're reading a Nerd Fitness book; make me proud.

Try blending your breakfast. Unfortunately, common breakfast meals here in the USA are pretty awful for you. A bagel and a glass of OJ, a bowl of sugary cereal, apple juice and muffin…..it's all carbs and sugar! No wonder we're fat - none of those options listed have much nutritional value.

You need to start thinking about breakfast differently. Hopefully you're an eggs guy/girl, because omelets, scrambled eggs, and hard boiled eggs are some of the best, quickest, and healthiest breakfasts you can prepare.

If you're like me, you don't like eggs. I now drink my breakfast in the form of a kick-ass, homemade smoothie! The recipes section has my go-to breakfast smoothie, with links to other options for how you can start blending your own breakfast.

Spice things up the right way. Without condiments, food can get boring. I discuss some decent spices to start cooking with in the resources sections, but here are some other ways to liven up your meals:

- **Salsa** is generally quite healthy, made from veggies and fruit, and low in calories. Put it on whatever you like.
- **For salads,** a simple vinegar-based dressing is low in calories and can adjust taste. Again, always read the labels and beware the calorie and sugar count.
- **Guacamole** – relatively low in calories, made with avocados and other veggies, high in healthy fats! Check out Wholly Guacamole for a healthy store bought brand, or make your own from scratch.
- **Soy sauce** – although often times high in sodium, soy sauce is a great way to spice up a meal and you only need a tiny quantity of it for the desired taste. Go with the low-sodium version.
- **What about ketchup, relish, mayo?** Ketchup is usually high in sodium, sugar and carbs, and mayo is super high in calories, so I'd recommend limiting use of both. A little of each won't kill you, just don't go making ketchup sandwiches. Relish can have a higher amount of carbs than you'd expect (10+), so just keep an eye on the labels and track your calories accordingly.

- **Mustard** – 0 calories. I don't know how, but it doesn't have any calories, so go pour yourself a tall glass of mustard. Mmmmmm
- **Cheese?** Cheese is high in protein, but also very high in calories. Just keep the numbers in mind when you're putting cheese on something – here's a great list of all kinds of cheeses, broken down by nutrition.

Challenge yourself. I challenge you to become a not-terrible cook like myself. I certainly won't win any awards, but I can prepare a few healthy meals cheaply and with minimal effort. Start basic, learn the ropes, and then expand from there.

Make it fun. Give yourself a night off every once and a while. If you've been cooking most of your own meals, it's okay to go out and grab some food prepared by somebody else. Just keep it relatively healthy!

I'm a fan of the 80% rule - try to eat healthy meals at least 80% of the time. Eat well during the week, avoid liquid calories during the week, and then you can enjoy beer and wings on the weekend like the rest of America (or whatever your favorite unhealthy meal might be). I still eat greasy pizza, chicken parm, french fries, and potato chips, I just eat these things in small quantities and only on occasion.

What about healthy choice meals? Early in the guide, I was ragging on "healthy" microwave meals for loading up their products with a bunch of genetically engineered ingredients.

However, I know that when you're just getting started with this whole "healthy eating" thing, or you work in an office and you don't have many options, it's easy to turn to these frozen lunches and dinners for your meals.

In my opinion, eating these microwave lunches and dinners instead of eating fast food is kind of like getting run over by a kid on a bike versus getting hit by a truck. Obviously you'd prefer to get run over by a bike than a truck, but that doesn't mean it feels good!

If you're going to eat them, pay REALLY CLOSE ATTENTION to the calorie count, sodium content, and carbs/sugar content. These meals are often promoted as "low fat" but they jack up the sodium and sugar content to compensate. Aim for the low calorie, low sodium, low sugar meals - and be careful. These things aren't very filling sometimes, so it's easy to eat a 300 calorie meal and then immediately be hungry again. Aim for real food whenever possible!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN?

When you walk into a grocery store, your grocery list should already be made. Take 10 minutes before going to the store to write down all of the things you want to buy, and then don't allow yourself to buy anything that's not on the list (unless you come across a new funky vegetable that's on sale and you want to try it).

If you're lazy, download a grocery store app on your iPhone.

And no, adding chocolate chip cookies in a frenzy as you're walking down the cookie aisle does NOT count.

Don't shop when you're hungry – you'll tend to grab more crap food and less healthy stuff because you'll be thinking with your stomach and not with your head. Booooooo!

Stay to the edges. The majority of the stuff you'll be buying will be on the outer rim of the supermarket, so that's where you'll spend most of your time:

- **Start with the vegetables and fruit**s, and either pick up ones that you know you'll like, or try new ones. Depending on the season, certain veggies/fruits will be cheaper than others. This is a perfect opportunity to be frugal AND adventurous! Oh happy day.
- **Move onto the meats** – lean chicken breast, lean ground beef (preferably grass-fed if you can afford it), turkey breast, lean pork, steak.
- **If you're a fish fan (different than a Phish fan)**, head on over to the fish section. Fish are loaded with good omega-3 fatty acids (the GOOD ones that you need). Aim for wild fish (instead of farmed fish) whenever possible, and pick fish that are lower on the food chain.
- **Dairy & Eggs** – eggs are a great protein source for breakfast, low-fat cottage cheese is too, as is milk (in moderation). Dairy's a Primal Diet no-no, but if you're a moo cow fan, I'm not going to tell you no.
- **Hit up the frozen vegetables** – Bags of frozen broccoli, spinach, green beans, vegetable medleys, and so on. They will stay good for months, they're cheap, they can be prepared in minutes, and are really healthy.
- **SOME grains** – oats, brown rice, and whole grain bread – make sure you read the label for each of these and make sure they're the good kind (very low sugar, no high fructose corn syrup).

MY GAME PLAN

I'm a simple eater and a picky eater (you should have seen how I used to eat), so I tend to eat the same meals over and over.

If you're a healthy-diet newbie, this might be a good example for you to follow:

- **Tyson frozen boneless skinless chicken breast tenders in a bag.**
- **Fresh asparagus –** I freaking love asparagus
- **3 or 4 apples –** bag 'em up!
- **A giant container of old fashioned Quaker Oats for oatmeal**
- **A box of generic "boil in a bag" brown rice**
- **Frozen, generic bags of broccoli, green beans, and stir fry vegetables**
- **Trader Joe's almond butter.** If you like peanut butter, TRY this
- **Whole-grain flaxseed bread -** for my almond butter sandwiches
- **Generic frozen strawberries, frozen spinach, and low-sugar Trop-50 OJ for my smoothie**s (explained in the recipe section)
- **90% lean ground beef and whole wheat buns (no high fructose corn syrup) for the occasional hamburger cooked on the grill**
- **Pam olive oil spray -** I use this because I'm too lazy to use real olive oil.

This is not a list to live by, but rather just an example of a reformed chicken finger and mac-n-cheese fanatic who has finally started to embrace a healthier lifestyle and meal choices.

I expect within the next year most of this will be completely different as my experience with cooking grows and I start to take more risks.

Remember, I'm a baby steps kind of guy.

A FEW GOOD MEALS

In case it hasn't quite hit home yet that eating healthy is a good move, here are some sample healthy meals and their nutritional value compared to what a normal person might eat for breakfast, lunch, and/or a snack.

HEALTHY BREAKFASTS

Homemade smoothie – 1/3 cup oats (100 cal), 8 oz low-sugar OJ (50 cal), 8-10 frozen strawberries (50 cal), frozen spinach (30 cal), Optimum Nutrition 100% Whey Protein (120 cal, 28g of protein). **total** – 350 calories, 30+g of protein, 53g of carbs.

Eggs and oatmeal – three hard boiled eggs (270 calories, 20g of protein), 1/2 cup of oats (150 calories). **total** – 420 calories, 20+g of protein, 27g of carbs.

Breakfast burrito – whole wheat tortilla (130 cal, 23g of carbs), 3 scrambled egg beaters (90 cal, 18g of protein), salsa (5 calories, low fat cheddar cheese (50 calories, 7g of protein) **total** – 275 calories, less than 30g of carbs, 25+g of protein.

UNHEALTHY BREAKFASTS

Two bowls of Lucky Charms and a tall glass of apple juice – 2 bowls of Lucky Charms (220 cal, 44g of carbs, 22g of sugar, 2g of protein), milk for cereal (120 cal, 11g of carbs, 10g of sugar, 8g of protein), Apple Juice (110 cal, 22g of carbs, 21g of sugar). **total –** 450 cal, 77g of carbs, 51g of sugar, 10g of protein.

Honey Bran Muffin and Orange Juice – Honey Bran Muffin (480 cal, 15 g of fat, 79g of carbs, 11g of protein), Orange Juice (110 cal, 25g of carbs, 21g of sugar). **Total** – 590 cal, 104g of carbs, 21+g of sugar.

HEALTHY LUNCHES AND DINNER

Chicken, brown rice, and asparagus (prepared the night before and microwaved at office) – baked chicken tenderloins (100 calories, 24g of protein), 1 serving of brown rice (100 calories, 22g of carbs), 10 asparagus stalks (20 calories, 4g of carbs). **total** – 220 calories, 24g of protein, 26g of carbs.

Steak salad – reheated 4 oz. of last night's steak leftovers (180 calories, 23g of protein), 2 cups of mixed greens (40 calories, 8g of carbs), fat-free balsamic vinagrette dressing (20 calories), and an apple (65 cal, 17g of carbs). **total** – 305 cal, 23+g of protein, 25g of carbs.

Turkey sandwich on wheat bread – 2 oz of roast turkey breast (50 cal, 12g of protein), two slices of double fiber flaxseed bread (140 cal, 30g of carbs), lettuce (6 cal), two slices of low fat cheese (120 cal, 14g of protein), mustard (3 cal) **total** – 319 cal, 26g of protein, 30g of carbs.

UNHEALTHY LUNCHES AND DINNER

Big Mac, large fry, large Coke – Big Mac (562 cal, 33g of fat, 44g of carbs, 11g of sugar), large fry (500 cal, 25g of fat, 63 g of carbs), large Coke (310 cal, 86g of carbs, 86g of sugar). **Total** – 1372 calories, 58g of fat, 195g of carbs, 97g of sugar.

3 slices of large pepperoni pizza – 3 x (330 calories, 870mg of sodium, 37g of carbohydrates, 13 g of protein) **total** – 990 calories, 2610mg of sodium, 111 g of carbs, 39g of protein).

HEALTHY SNACKS

Fresh fruit with cottage cheese – low fat cottage cheese (90 calories, 15 grams of protein), fresh fruit medley (120 calories, 20g of carbs). **total –** 210 calories, 15g of protein, 20g of carbs.

Apple slices with almond butter and natural beef jerky – Apple (65 cal, 18g of carbs), almond butter (190 cal, 8g of protein), natural beef jerky (70 cal, 6g of carbs, 10g of protein). **total –** 305 cal, 18g of protein, 26g of carbs.

UNHEALTHY SNACK

20 oz Coke and Doritos – 20 oz Coke (240 cal, 65g of carbs, 65g of sugar), bag of Doritos (150 cal, 17g of carbs, 2g of protein). total – 390 calories, 82g of carbs, 65g of sugar, 2g of protein.

Now, obviously it's possible to eat less of the bad stuff listed or WAY TOO MUCH of the good stuff listed to throw the numbers in the other direction, but more often than not you can eat a ridiculous amount of healthy food compared to how much bad food to get the same number of calories. What makes it worse is that the bad foods don't even fill you up, so you've eaten all those calories and you're ready to eat again.

Stick to the 80% rule: Try to make 80% of your meals healthy. If you want to splurge on a pizza over the weekend with your buddies, keep things in check during the week by eating healthy, and aim for just a slice or two instead of four. Portion control!

COOKING FOR NEWBIES

I'm going to make this so simple that even if you've never turned on your stove or bought a vegetable in your life, you will still be successful. It starts with making a concerted effort to actually start preparing healthy meals. Once you've got the attitude right, I can help show you the way.

HEALTHY COOKING STARTER KIT

If you're going to eat healthy, your kitchen is going to need a few things. Hopefully you already have some of this stuff, but just in case you don't, here are the things you should own, all of which you can buy at Target or Walmart for super cheap.

- **A cookie sheet** – for cooking chicken and vegetables in the oven
- **A blender** – for your super kick-ass breakfast shakes. A cheap $20 one will get the job done
- **A cutting board** – for cutting your vegetables
- **A good knife** – get yourself a GOOD knife to chop up your veggies, fruits, chicken, steak, fish, etc.

(continued on next page)

- **A pot or two** – to boil your vegetables and rice
- **A good non-stick pan** – stir-fry is your friend
- **A spatula** - for cooking meat on your grill, flipping your omelet, mixing up the food in your pan for stir-fry
- **A strainer** – for straining your rice, boiled vegetables, SMALL servings of pasta (for the occasional times you eat it)
- **Measuring cups and spoons** – for measuring out your sauces, liquids, and ingredients
- **Tin foil** – to line your cookie sheet, and to ball up and throw at the cat for fun

SPICES, OILS, AND CONDIMENTS STARTER KIT

Once you have all of tools listed above in your artillery, it's important to pick up a few bullets (condiments and spices):

- **Olive Oil** – buy yourself a container of Extra Virgin Olive Oil, or if you're lazy just buy the Pam Olive Oil cooking spray.
- **Salt** – don't go CRAZY on the salt, but if you're cooking most of your own stuff it's okay to add some salt to give your food some flavor. I use sea salt.
- **Ground pepper.** I put it on almost everything when I'm cooking (in moderation, of course).
- **Garlic powder** – great for use on spicing your meats when you prepare them, unless you want to dice your own garlic. Good for warding off vampires too, which is important.
- **Onion powder** – in case you don't feel like crying and chopping up your own onions, you can get lazy and buy onion powder.
- **Low-Sodium Soy sauce** – for marinating your chicken/beef and cooking with your vegetables for stir-fry. Rather than tell you how to marinate, you'll get directions on how to marinate from the recipes listed in the resources section.

COOKING VEGETABLES FOR NEWBIES

Here are five different ways that you can learn to prepare vegetables, increasing in difficulty from "OMG that was easy" to "wow, easy."

1) Just eat them. Most veggies taste better cooked, but some you can just eat raw. Cut up raw celery and spread some natural peanut butter on it. Doesn't get much easier to prepare than that. If you want to eat a salad, they even sell them in pre-made bags. I'd recommend starting with pre-made salads to start, and then make your own!

2) Microwave some frozen broccoli/green beans – Buy a bag of frozen broccoli. Read the instructions, and place the broccoli in your microwave for however long it tells you. Open the bag, dump it on a plate next to your protein source (chicken, fish, whatever). A quick squeeze of lemon juice on the broccoli = mmmmmm.

3) Boil some frozen green beans – Buy a big bag of frozen green beans and stick them in your freezer. Put a small pot of water on to boil. Grab a handful of green beans, dump them into the water, and let them cook for 5-7 minutes. Stir once while they're cooking, then strain them, dump on a plate, and eat. I prefer boiling to microwaving.

4) Baked asparagus (and pretty much any other vegetable) – Buy them in a bundle for a few bucks. When you come home, wash the asparagus with water, dry them on a paper towel and heat the oven to 375 degrees.

- *While it's pre-heating, snap off the bottom part of the asparagus* (grab the bottom with one hand and grab it about a third of the way up from the bottom with the other hand – just bend the stalk until it breaks – it will snap in the right spot).
- *Put a piece of tinfoil on a cookie sheet and spread out the asparagus* (I usually eat like 12 pieces for my meals).
- *Either coat them with extra virgin olive oil* or spray them with olive oil spray.
- *Roll them around with your hand so they're covered in the olive oil.*
- *Sprinkle them with pepper and sea salt.*
- *Stick them in the oven for 12-15 minutes.* Usually done in 12.

5) Grilled vegetables – chop up whatever vegetables you have into smaller pieces, mix them in a bowl with some olive oil so they're evenly coated. Sprinkle them with salt and pepper, and then either skewer them or wrap them in tinfoil and throw them right on your grill on medium heat for about 20 minutes. **Here's a great explanation of it**.

6) Vegetable stir-fry – chop up all of your vegetables (the list from the previous 'grilled vegetables' link is a good start. Or, buy a bag of frozen vegetable stir-fry medley (which is what I do… lazy veggies for the win!). Chop them up into small pieces, heat up your stove top to medium heat, pour some olive oil/soy sauce into your non-stick pan. Add your vegetables, and flip them over occasionally as they crackle and cook. Add in salt and pepper. Remove the veggies when their edges look cooked. You will have to estimate this, and you'll get better with practice.

Hopefully you're no longer afraid of vegetables now, because they're not that scary. Moving on! Let's look at two things I cook ALL the time, which can serve as a base for a good breakfast and a good lunch/dinner.

STEVE'S EASY RECIPES

I am not a great cook, but I'm a hell of a direction follower. Seriously, you should have seen me build the **Kinex Big Ball Factory** as a kid – just flawless direction following all OVER the place.

I want to start with two things that I make pretty much every single day. If you're a complete kitchen newbie and you are scared to even get started, this is the equivalent of me holding your hand through the whole process. It's okay buddy, I've been there.

Steve's Rebel Breakfast Shake

I've been drinking my breakfast for 5 years now, and I don't think I'll go back to eating a normal breakfast ever again. It's too quick, too easy, and too good for me.

Here are the ingredients that I need to make my shake:

- 1.5 cups of old-fashioned oats (way TOO MUCH for most people)
- 8 frozen strawberries (I buy a bulk-size bag of frozen strawberries and keep them on hand always).
- a handful(-ish) of frozen spinach (same thing, big bag).
- 8 oz of low calorie, low sugar OJ (I use Tropicana Trop-50)
- 1 scoop (30 grams) of 100% whey protein. I use the Optimum Nutrition Vanilla flavor (Google it).

I throw all of this in a blender for 30 seconds and I have a nutrient-full, high-protein breakfast. Now, if you're trying to lose weight, I'd recommend cutting way back on the oats compared to me; I put the 1.5 cups in there because I need the extra calories to bulk up – try just half a cup of oats or no oats if you're going primal.

Before you freak out about liquefied oats and frozen spinach, trust me when I say that it doesn't change the taste too much, just the color and consistency. Just try it!

Mix it Up - You can substitute frozen mixed berries for the strawberries, add in a banana, swap almond milk for the OJ, and more. Half of the fun is finding ways to stay creative. Start with some liquid (low calorie OJ, almond milk, or skim milk), add in some fruit, maybe a frozen green veggie like spinach or kale, and add 30g of protein from protein powder if you're looking to up your protein intake, and blend away.

Steve's Go To Meal - Chicken, Brown Rice, and Asparagus

Rudimentary, basic, and so easy to cook. My friend Jess at **HalfOfJess.com** commented that this might be the most BOY meal ever, and I'm okay with that. Here's exactly what you need.

What you need:

- Skinless, unbreaded, frozen chicken tenderloins
- 10 minute boil-In-a-bag brown rice
- Fresh asparagus
- Olive oil cooking spray
- Garlic powder, ground pepper, sea salt
- A cookie sheet and tin foil

How to Cook It (watch the video here):

1. **Preheat your oven to 375 degrees.**
2. **Wash your asparagus with water and dry off with a paper towel.**
3. **Put down a piece of tinfoil on a cookie sheet, and lay out the tenderloins on the foil.** Spray both sides of each piece with the olive oil spray. Sprinkle the garlic powder, ground pepper, and sea salt on the chicken, then stick it in the oven for 33-ish minutes.
4. **Put a pot of water on to boil when there's 15 min. left on the timer.**
5. **Pull the chicken out of the oven when there are 13 min. left.** Pause the timer.
6. **Take your asparagus, and break off the bottom of each 'stem' -** if you grab towards the bottom, you'll feel where it's supposed to break.
7. **Put them on the cookie sheet next to the chicken, and spray again with olive oil spray.** Use your hands to roll the asparagus so they're well coated with the stuff. Sprinkle with sea salt and pepper.
8. **Put the chicken and asparagus back in the oven, and restart the timer.** Drop your bag of rice right into the boiling water on the stove.
9. **With 3 minutes left on the oven timer, your rice is done.** Carefully empty the pot in your sink, then open the bag, and empty onto a plate.
10. **When the chicken and asparagus is done, put it on the plate with your rice, and EAT.**

Mix it Up - Now, if you don't like asparagus, you can substitute in broccoli, green beans, carrots, zuccini, squash, cucumbers, whatever! Just get some vegetables in there. Simply decide how you want to prepare it (microwave, boil, steam, grill, bake), follow the directions, and git 'er dun!

If you're not a fan of frozen chicken, you can buy fresh chicken breast from the store instead. I simply buy the frozen because I'm lazy and impatient (working on it though, I swear).

I'm going to be honest with you – I eat those two things listed above for like 80% of my weekly meals, which is boring as hell but oh so easy and efficient.

I'm guessing you're less boring than I, and you want some more recipes! You are in luck. The next few pages are home to some of my favorite resources around the net that will get you started on your journey to become a flippin' awesome chef.

RECIPE RESOURCES

A quick note before we begin: It's easy to see all of the sites listed below and all of the recipes listed on each and get really overwhelmed. I ask that you simply pick one recipe from one of the resources below, and then MAKE IT. Print out the recipe, buy the ingredients, and set aside time tonight or tomorrow to actually cook it. Then, next week, pick a NEW recipe and cook that.

Each week, challenge yourself to prepare one new meal.

As you expand your repertoire, you'll start to get a hang of what you love and what you don't love, what's fun for you to make and what's not, what makes you happy and what doesn't. The only way to find out for sure is to constantly try new things.

Here's a tip from my mom: print out your favorite recipes and put them in a binder, adding notes on any changes you make or what works best. Thanks mom!

SNACKS

If you're not going to be eating chips, cookies, pretzels, and candy all of the time, what the heck ARE you supposed to eat when you need a snack? **Mark at Mark's Daily Apple (can you tell I love this guy?) has a great list of his favorite snacks:**

1) **Beef jerky** – try the heath food section of your grocery store for healthy jerky compared to the brands sold in a gas station
2) **Celery with cream cheese or almond butter**
3) **Apple slices with almond butter or natural peanut butter** – freaking awesome
4) **Cottage cheese with nuts or berries** – protein and good calories
5) **Dark Chocolate** – yup, you can eat chocolate in moderation, just make sure it's dark (and 70% or greater cocoa content)
6) **Hard-boiled eggs** – sprinkle some salt and seasoning in a bag with the peeled egg, shake it up, and you have a good high-protein snack
7) **Nuts and seeds** – sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds for the win! Feel free to spit them at your co-workers over the cubicle wall.
8) **Trail mix** – make your own! Buy some bags of raw almonds, walnuts, pecans, and throw in some dried fruit as well.

For a list of even MORE snacks that are paleo approved (and thus generally quite healthy for you), visit **Mark's snack list**.

PALEO DIET FANS

If you have a slight interest in the Paleo Diet (the best total-package food philosophy out there, in my humble opinion), you owe it to yourself to read **The Primal Blueprint** by Mark of Mark's Daily Apple (there he is again). He also sells a **Primal Cookbook** too, but if you're looking for free recipes you've come to the right place:

- **Mark's Daily Apple** – Although he sells the cookbook on Amazon, Mark also lists over 100 free primal recipes on his site. Pick something on the list, go buy the ingredients, and follow the instructions! So easy even a caveman can do it.
- **Everyday Paleo** - great pictures, easy to follow recipes, and pretty interesting combinations. Click on FOOD in the nav bar, and the meals are broken down into breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- **Paleo Food Directory** - a list of every single food, drink, and condiment that's considered Paleo. A great reference if you're not sure.

REGULAR DIETS

Not necessarily ONLY Paleo or ONLY Vegan or Veggie, these are healthy resources for everyday folks like you and me who are just trying to cook a good healthy meal.

- **Ace Fitness Nutrition** – My new favorite food site. After you specify what kind of meal you want to make (chicken, meat, vegetarian, quick, budget, etc.), it tells you how long it takes to make each recipe! This definitely comes in handy when you're on a tight schedule. For example, **here are 57 recipes for chicken** that take under 30 minutes to cook. Freaking awesome.
- **Men's Health** – although it can be kind of corny and sometimes reads like an infomercial, Men's Health always gives pretty solid advice as far I'm concerned. They have a pretty good resource for recipes as well, so check it out.
- **Nerd Fitness Message Boards** – join us over on the NF message boards for some good recipes and discussions! If you're a good cook and you have a recipe to share, we'd love to have it on there.

VEGETARIAN MEALS

I am not a vegetarian, but I know quite a few very successful athletes out there who are. Rather than pretend to discuss the finer intricacies of a vegetarian diet, for which I am highly unqualified, I'll instead direct to you to some vegetarian sites that have solid recipes (note: I'm a huge fan of the Paleo diet, so my diet philosophy doesn't line up with some of the vegetarian or vegan philosophy on carbs and grains, but if it works for you and makes you healthy and happy I am all for it).

- **No Meat Athlete** - I just found this site the other day thanks to my friend Karol over at **RidiculouslyExtraordinary.com**, but I'm really digging the humor and simplicity of it. This is a list of a ridiculous amount of vegetarian and vegan recipes, and they're coming from an athlete. I'll take it!

- **Ace Fitness Vegetarian List** – again, broken down by how long it takes to prepare each meal. This site is full of win.

VEGAN MEALS

Once again, I am not qualified to discuss a vegan diet because I've simply never done it. The best resources passed along to me for vegan recipes (other than those above in the **No Meat Athlete list**) are listed here:

- **Vegan Athlete?** If you're eating Vegan and you're looking to get into great shape, you owe it to yourself to follow **Jason Ferruggia** – his language is often vulgar and politically incorrect, but damn this guy rules. Strong as hell, one of the best authorities I know on training athletes, and he's vegan! He doesn't recipes a lot, but he does discuss the challenges of being a vegan athlete.
- **Another vegan athlete resource** – A great article on problems that usually plague vegan athletes and solutions for each issue.
- **Gone Raw** - dozens and dozens of raw vegan recipes, easy directions to follow, and good pictures. Lots of desserts, but enough decent meals too.

These resources are merely meant to whet your appetite. Maybe some day there will be a Nerd Fitness Cookbook with Mario marinated steak, Zelda zucchini squash, and Master Chief chicken, but until then these recipes should get you into your kitchen and confidently cooking up some awesome meals.

GOOD LUCK

You are now a lean, mean, food-shopping machine. Today or tomorrow, I want you to go to the store and buy a vegetable you've never tried before (along with one or two that you have). Scroll through the sites listed above, pick out an easy recipe that you can cook quickly using those veggies, and follow the directions to prepare it.

You might not like the taste, you might burn the vegetables, you might be an awful cook. Or, you might do everything right and find a new dish that you absolutely LOVE. You've got all the ammunition you need, now it's time to put this training into action!

Good luck soldier. Make me proud.